



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

*Volume III.  
Number 6.*

*June, 1895.*

*Whole  
Number 26.*

# THE SCHOOL REVIEW

## A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

---

### SHOULD THERE BE A COURSE OF SIX YEARS IN LATIN IN OUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS?\*

It may seem a deplorable fact that in the Secondary Schools of our country, public and private taken together, there are eight pupils in Latin to one in Greek.<sup>†</sup> That only fifteen to twenty thousand pupils should be studying Greek is of course a bad thing. It looks bad, when we think how many more, both in absolute numbers, as well as proportionally to the population, are studying Greek in England, or France, or Germany. It is bad in itself, as evincing how few there are who are devoting themselves to the study of all studies which fosters acute and noble thinking, the finest taste, the ideal literary temper, and an unquenchable love of knowledge and truth. Yet, for all this, though pupils in Greek are comparatively few and always have been few, and perhaps always will be few, they are, nevertheless, as a rule, pupils of exceptional promise, when compared with the mass. They are the best part of the intellectual *élite* in our secondary schools. It makes little difference how this is accounted for, whether by the supposition that

---

\* Address by Professor Andrew F. West, of Princeton University, before the Classical Conference at Ann Arbor, Michigan, March 27th, 1895. (See p. 372.)

† Such was the fact in 1891-92, according to the last Report of the United States Commissioner of Education (Vol. II, pp. 695 and 698), and the proportions must be nearly the same now. According to this Report, the pupils in Latin in public secondary schools were 93,144, and in private secondary schools 38,892, making a total of 132,036. The pupils in Greek in public secondary schools amounted to 7,397 and in private secondary schools to 8,543, making a total of 15,940. These statistics are fairly complete, lacking only a comparatively small number of schools and the pupils who study under private tutors. At the present time we may roughly estimate the pupils studying Latin as probably less than 150,000 and those studying Greek as clearly less than 20,000.

Greek produces fine effects on boys who are capable of these effects, or that boys of a certain kind take to Greek, or even by the idea that tradition is responsible for the prejudice in favor of Greek, and that other studies may produce as good results. The undeniable thing is that there is a fine effect secured, wherever Greek is well taught, and to say other studies will do equally well does not destroy this great fact, for I need hardly argue in this presence that there is an affinity, amounting to the recognition of kinship, between a certain class of the finest minds and Greek. Still, there ought to be many more boys learning Greek than there now are in this country, and so from this point of view it is a deplorable fact that there are eight in Latin to one in Greek.

However, it is not a deplorable fact that not far from a hundred and fifty thousand boys are now studying Latin in our secondary schools. It is a great number, though it ought to be greater,—and as the number becomes greater, the amount of time devoted to the study longer and the methods of instruction more rational, the more will our higher culture be helped in general, and the more will attention be directed at the same time to the importance of Greek. For where is the Latin professor in this whole land who is not forced, the longer he reads Latin, to feel how much greater is Greek and how overwhelmingly in debt to Greek is all that he studies? He goes further. He sees that to know Latin in its integrity, without mutilation or cramping, some knowledge of Greek is indispensable—and consequently that in order to get better Latin we shall always be needing Greek. And so, as was suggested a moment ago, the more Latin is studied, the more will the cause of Greek be helped, by the very necessities of Latin. The *Eadem utriusque est via* of Quintilian is here true in a new sense, not in the sense of the real unity of their linguistic structure, nor yet in the sense that a man who knows Greek is supremely helped in Latin, but in the sense that the demand of Latin for its own integrity, is a demand that can never be met without Greek. Accordingly we may approach the ques-

tion of extending the Latin in our secondary schools to a six-year course with the assurance at the outset that if such an extension is good for Latin, it is helpful to Greek as well, and presumably to other studies, notably the modern languages.

The questions to be answered in any discussion of this subject are two,—first, Is the proposal sound? and second, Is it practicable? I. The first question divides into two parts, (1) Is such an extension good for Latin itself? and (2) Is it good for Latin in relation to its other studies? That the proposal is good for Latin itself seems very clear. Notice that at this point it is not the question as to whether we have time in our school programme or enough good teachers ready at hand or means to carry out the proposal. But the question in this form is, What time is needed for the proper study of Latin? and, Will the proposed extension substantially give the time, or at least so much of it that a great gain will be secured? Now Latin, like Greek, cannot produce its proper effect on the pupil without prolonged study. It may do him some good. It may be better for him to have learned and lost than never to have learned at all. We are not inquiring as to how little Latin a boy can get along with, but what amount of time he needs to understand it, if Latin is to produce its proper effect upon him. There is no need here to give the arguments which prove that the study of Latin needs a good deal of time. They are old and well known. They all rest on the fundamental fact that the pupil's study of Latin is an initiation into a regular and complicated, though never obscure, language and literature, which contain a discipline and culture admirable in itself and highly valuable, even indispensable, to a true appreciation of our own civilization. This priority of Latin to our modern life is no mere priority of time, like the priority of Chinese or Russian, nor is it a priority of time and incidentally modifying cause, like the priority of Arabic, nor is it a priority like that of Hebrew, which, however important in its other relations, has no important relation to our language. It is a priority of determining cause. With-

out Latin our modern life would have been different, our own English tongue would have been different, and our relation to other modern languages greatly altered. It is because of its priority as a determining cause that its relation to us is permanently defined. Being permanently defined as an essential of any higher culture that aims at explaining our own civilization and language, and being a study of considerable complexity, calling for plenty of time on the part of the pupil, it is clear that if it is to be studied thoroughly it ought to begin early enough for the pupil to take full advantage of it in relation to other studies which lie in close relation to it, and, with this secured, as much earlier as the study of Latin needs for its completeness and the development of the young pupil's mind will allow. Accordingly, the very nature of Latin as a subject of school study demands that it begin early and last a good while, if it is to have full opportunity to produce its best effects.

Now, have our American schools and colleges so arranged their programmes that Latin begins early enough, has enough time allotted to make it sufficiently substantial while it lasts, and lasts long enough? I might add, Is it taught well enough? But this question is out of place here, for, as Professor Shorey well remarked at the Educational Congress in Chicago in 1893, "we must be consistently optimistic or pessimistic" in regard to this question of how studies are taught. An indictment of bad teaching is one thing, an indictment of the character of a study is an utterly different thing. The question whether Latin or any study is badly taught is of course a vital one. But it has no proper place in our discussion, unless it be a fact that Latin is so badly taught that it is exceptional in this respect. We need not waste much time over this point, for as a matter of fact, Latin is in no such predicament. Compared with the teaching of other studies it is surely not worse than the average. It cannot well be worse than some of the French and German teaching, or than some of the folly which is allowed to misrepresent the great name of science in certain courses in elementary physics and chemistry. And yet no one thinks of

disturbing French and German, or of making an indictment against the sciences because here and there they are badly taught.

Let us, then, return to our proper themes. Does Latin begin early enough? Has it time enough to be substantial while it lasts? and, Does it last long enough?

The age for beginning Latin has been discussed from the psychological standpoint again and again, and, so far as I know, there is no general dissent from the position that the age of ten or eleven years is about as early as it is advisable to give boys their start. Of course there have been some who favor taking boys even younger than this. There are instances where such a very early start, say at eight or nine years of age, has produced remarkable results. But they are the rare instances, and cannot be made a basis for school programmes in general. In some of these cases, however, it is to be feared the very early start has been injurious, resulting in a precocious and superficial juvenile knowledge, which did not enter deeply into the subsequent manhood as an enlightening and informing element of character. It is sometimes forgotten that the Romans did not write books for children, but books for men. There are other cases where starting a boy very early in Latin has been a real injustice to him, producing a lifelong antipathy to the study. Deducting these genuine early cases, there is a spurious form of early study of Latin, which deserves just a passing word. We have all heard great tales of boys who swept the circle of college preparatory Latin before they arrived at their teens, veritable young Jack-the-Giant-Killers. Suppose they did. Does this show that they studied Latin at the best time for them or in the best way? When they finished their Latin studies, had they gained a ripe appreciation of them? Were they masters of Latin? Of course not, unless they were geniuses, and for geniuses we cannot legislate. But some of these tales are mythical. They go with other tales calculated to impress upon us our degeneracy compared with the men of other days. Who has not seen some elderly person, reputed

to have broken the ice in his pitcher every winter morning for years, to have sawed a cord of wood before breakfast, and to have performed generally and with ease other labors of Hercules? Of such were some of those who demolished Latin early and in the same way.

But there is a better way to discover when Latin ought to begin, and that is by an appeal to the best educated experience of the world. For this question is after all a question for experts to determine. In Prussia students enter the universities at an average age of a little under twenty years. They have just finished a gymnasial course of nine years, with Latin all the way through. Thus they begin Latin by the time they are eleven years old. In the French Lycées the beginning age is almost the same, possibly a trifle earlier. Of the English schools it is harder to speak with precision, in the absence of a secondary programme which applies equally to the whole country. But it is safe to say that boys in the great English Public Schools begin Latin fully as early as in Prussia. What is our situation? Let us hear in the words of the Report of the Latin Conference to the Committee of Ten on Secondary School studies.‡ “In the United States the average age is about fifteen years, and probably above that number rather than below it.” It is, of course, the judgment of this Report that we ought to begin Latin earlier, and that judgment is in accord with the best modern experience.

Still, taking Latin as we have it, is enough time now allowed it proportionally to the rest of the school programme, or, in other words, how many exercises a week ought Latin to have? In a Prussian gymnasium the average is about seven exercises a week. In a French Lycée it is slightly less, and the same is probably true of the English public schools. Of course it is to be remembered that both the French and Prussian schools have a greater total of exercises each week than is the case in our schools. But the Latin is at least one-fourth of the whole secondary school work. The Committee of Ten in-

---

‡ Report of the Committee of Ten, Page 60.

clines to a school week containing twenty periods of class exercises, each exercise being forty to forty-five minutes in length. Five exercises a week in Latin during the time it is taught is accordingly one-fourth of our proposed school programme. In the four years' course suggested by the Committee of Ten as the classical course, and the four years' course styled the Latin-Scientific, the number of exercises a week assigned to Latin is five for the first two years and four for the last two. This comes so near to giving one-fourth of the time, that it may be accepted as almost a sufficient proportion of the school programme. Such an amount of time for four years represents nothing more than an advance on the practice of our poorer schools, an equivalent to the practice of our better schools, and an approach toward what is allowed in our best schools. However, if Latin were studied a long enough time, there would be nothing to quarrel over in a secondary programme which allots it one-fourth of the class exercises.

But, after all, one exercise a day in Latin for four school years, which is a trifle more than the Committee of Ten puts in its programme, is insufficient. One-fourth of the school time while Latin is being taught is of course all Latin ought to have, but five exercises a week for four years is only about one-third of the actual time given to Latin in the Prussian gymnasium. The showing is somewhat better if we consider not the actual time given in the Prussian gymnasium, but the proportion allotted to Latin in comparison with the rest of the gymnasial programme. It then becomes a question between one-fourth of our secondary school's work for four years and one-fourth of the gymnasial work for nine years,—but even in this the showing is more than two to one against us. Of course we must not leave out the two years of prescribed Latin found in many of our colleges, and amounting at most to one-fourth of the Freshmen and Sophomore years. Adding this in, the best showing we can make is one-fourth of six years' work given to Latin as opposed to one-fourth of nine years' work given in Prussia. And the showing we could make in comparison with



the French and English schools would be but little more to our advantage. Clearly the trouble is not with the proportion of time given to Latin while it is studied, but with the number of years devoted to it. Some may think the remedy is to be found in requiring more Latin in college, and thus supplementing the deficient school work. Suppose this were done, and we were to add two years of prescribed Latin to the two years now prescribed in many colleges. The average of graduation in our leading colleges is at least twenty-two years. With four years of college Latin preceded by four years school Latin the American boy would still begin to study Latin as late as he now begins it, and no remedy would be found for this evil. Furthermore, another evil would be created. College students are older than they were a generation ago. They cannot be kept in leading-strings forever. When a young man comes of age he ought to be far enough advanced to be out of his secondary studies, and if he pursues Latin at that age it ought not to be to learn how to read it, but to take it as a real university study, in which case he ought to be free to choose it or leave it. It is not best to keep giving young men the studies they ought to have had when they were boys. Furthermore, we cannot spare the time in the upper years of American colleges and universities, and the increasing age of students is the reason why the time cannot be spared. They must get to their life work, and if we do not arrange so that they can get to their life work reasonably early, they will break away from college studies. But even if they would stay and stand a dose of four years prescribed college Latin on top of four years prescribed school Latin, it would not be wise to have it so, because if Latin is not begun early the full benefits of the study are not secured, and if begun early it does not need to be prescribed up to the end of the college course.

So far, then, as the interests of Latin itself are concerned, it is clear that while the proportion of school time allotted Latin while it lasts is fairly satisfactory, Latin does not begin early enough nor does it last long enough, and it would be a

good thing for Latin to make it begin at least two years earlier than it now does. In this way an American boy starting his Latin at twelve years of age in the upper classes of the grammar school, and pursuing it for four years longer in the high school, would not need to continue it a day longer in college than he now does, and would be far better educated than he now is.

But is the proposal good for Latin in its relation to other studies? The answer is almost inevitable that it is. It is natural to suppose that if any great central study is adjusted rationally so far as concerns its own advantage, the effect of this will be good on everything else which in any way depends upon that study. We may take this as an axiom. Let us glance at the subjects with which Latin is most closely related. Greek is one of these and need not be discussed here, for the benefit is only too obvious. Take the case of our own language. Great as English is, it is not great grammatically, whereas the boy who is beginning Latin is not so much studying a grammar as grammar in general. He is gaining the grammatical instinct as such, and the earlier he gets this the better. And where will the most of our boys in secondary schools get it better than in Latin? Some may say in Greek. But this need not be argued, inasmuch as only a small number will study Greek compared with those who will study Latin. Nor will the grammars of French and German stand him in such good stead as will the Latin grammar, mainly because these languages and grammars are coördinate with English, whereas the relation of Latin to the modern grammars is a radical one. They do not explain Latin grammar, but Latin grammar is constantly doing a great deal to explain them. And so, not only in English but in modern languages, the earlier study of Latin is an immediate help. Any good teacher can point to many an instance where this has proved true, even down to the accuracy of English spelling. How many of our best educated men have never needed a full grammatical training in English simply because of their Latin grammar? This early study of

Latin is good for other things besides our own and foreign modern languages. It is a good thing for the boy in his relation to scientific study. It is admitted that some scientific study should come early. It is also becoming more and more the opinion that the observational side of science should come early, and that the analytical part of science should follow the observational. It is clear that if the time in the school programme permits room for Latin and the elements of the observational sciences, the boy is helped in his boyish study of science by the increased ability he gains from his elementary Latin. This results from the definiteness and regularity of the Latin language, which fosters the pupil's power of accurate discrimination in his thinking, and at the same time of accuracy in his expression. Even at this early stage he receives real though only incidental help from the number of Latin words which enter into scientific names, particularly in botany. But there is a more important side than this. The real serious study of science is not a schoolboy study. The severe consecutive analytical thinking involved in dealing with the great problems of nature can scarcely be attempted before the pupil attains some maturity. However valuable the elementary school courses in physics and chemistry may be for those who cannot go on to college and university studies, and take them up when they are old enough to do them substantial justice, it is a fair question whether school courses in these subjects are not injurious to those who are to pursue them more fully at a later stage. But whatever our opinion on this point, it can surely do no harm to physics and chemistry and astronomy and mechanics if the college student comes to them with a fine preparation in Latin instead of a poor one. The Report of the Latin Conference to the Committee of Ten well characterises Latin as "an instrument for training the mind to habits of intellectual conscientiousness, patience, discrimination, accuracy and thoroughness,—in a word, to habits of clear and sound thinking."§ But habits of clear and sound thinking are just what are demanded

---

§ Report of the Committee of Ten, page 61.

in all scientific study. Accordingly for all who take up the serious study of science in college, a better preparation in Latin is a great help. We need not give further examples, for the benefits of a good Latin training in the whole circle of college studies is not seriously questioned. Since, then, we are helped in the school studies, and also helped in the college studies, without any sacrifice of time on the part of other college studies to make way for Latin, we may conclude that the establishment of a six-year course in Latin instead of a four-year course as at present, would be beneficial to Latin and to other studies.

II. Our second main question remains to be answered. Is the proposal for a course of six years in Latin in our secondary schools practicable? If this question means, Can a six-year course to be instituted generally in our secondary schools immediately? the answer must be a negative one. Even if we could establish to-morrow all over the United States a six-year Latin course, it would not be desirable to do it. In no civilized country in the world is the individuality of secondary schools more marked than in this country. In this respect we bear a considerable though not a close resemblance to England, and are very different from France and Germany. In France and Germany the secondary course is embraced in one school, and is sometimes so in England. But with us the secondary teaching is divided between the college and the school. One of our great troubles to-day is the lack of close articulation between the last teaching of the secondary schools and the first teaching of the college. The upper limit of the school and the lower limit of the college do not evenly coincide, and consequently it is difficult to treat our secondary education as a unit. Furthermore, the secondary schools themselves are of various kinds. We have the endowed academy and the unendowed academy, the city high school, the preparatory departments of colleges, and the endless variety of private schools. The task of getting all these secondary schools to act on one plan for any one end is a very difficult one. Then, too, we have no such tests for the qualification of teachers as we ought to have.

Teaching in the secondary schools will become a profession in the same sense in which law and medicine are professions when we exact both a liberal and a professional culture from all who aspire to teach, and recognize the dignity of the teaching profession by paying respectable salaries. We have not yet done this. But in spite of all our drawbacks, I believe we are slowly moving in the right direction so far as concerns the Latin question. How can the Latin course be lengthened? In the case of academies having a four years' course it will gradually become practicable to add an extra lower year at first, and subsequently a second lower year, thus making the six years asked for. A similar arrangement will work in connection with the stronger unendowed private schools of the country. In regard to the high schools the case is somewhat different. Four years has by common consent come to be the length of the high school course. I am not well enough informed to say whether it is possible to make a six-year high school course. In cities where the grammar school course is followed by what is known as the intermediate school course of four years, it may be possible to split the intermediate course in two, giving the upper two years to the high school and the lower two years to the grammar school. But such is the tenacity of custom that it seems doubtful whether the high school course for some time to come will be more than a four-year-course. Still it hardly admits of question that if we can have a six-year high school course it will be a great help to our whole secondary education. The other solution is to begin Latin in the grammar school two years before entering the high school, and this would of course secure six years of Latin, though it would not secure it so well as to have the whole six years organized in one school.

An objection is sometimes brought against beginning Latin two years earlier, to the effect that it would require the displacement or diminution of some other study or studies. Now it is not proposed to compel anybody to learn Latin, but only to see that those who do study Latin have a proper amount of

time to get the best education in that study. No one will be compelled to take a six-year Latin course any more than he is compelled to take a four-year Latin course at the present time. No one will be compelled to stay in a six-year Latin course any more than he is compelled to stay in a four-year Latin course. But those who take up the study are guaranteed enough time to pursue it with thoroughness. No doubt for those who study Latin time will be taken from some other things, but the whole time proposed to be taken amounts, after all, to only one-half of one school year. The gain to Latin is very great. It is greater than the time taken represents. For the study of Latin has two stages, the first stage of discipline and the second stage of culture. The stage of discipline, while it can be made pleasant, is by no means so enjoyable as the later stage of culture, where the student experiences the deep enjoyment that comes from being able to read and appreciate great master pieces. Now the time that will be added will go mainly, perhaps almost entirely, to the second stage of the pupil's development, and this, I need hardly say, is a gain far greater than the time taken to secure it represents. We are not proposing two years more of Latin grammar, but that Latin grammar begin two years earlier, and that we give two years more of Latin literature. Hence the great gain in Latin is a fair offset for those who study Latin against the loss they may suffer in some other things. But what about the other things? What is it they will lose? The misery of English grammar, I hope, for one thing. The endless "doing of sums" for another thing, and the reading in reading books which have so little literature in them. But will arithmetic and English grammar and English literature suffer by this? By no means. For the Latin will be both tonic and cathartic in relation to other studies. Will it injure the learning of the modern languages? Will not the extra time given to Latin be more than made up by the speed and strength of the pupil's progress in French and German? It is a matter of common

admission that the greatest waste of our school time is just below the secondary schools, and it is in this place that the introduction of Latin for those who mean to study Latin will do great good. Suppose, then, we can add two years Latin gradually to our secondary work. With six years of Latin in school, and two in many of our colleges, we shall then have eight years of Latin occupying one-fourth of the pupil's school time, without injuring any other study, without prolonging Latin too late as a prescribed study in the student's life, and for the first time in our history we shall be in a way to put the study on a basis where it will bear comparison with the best Latin education of the world.

---

#### THE PROPOSED SIX-YEAR LATIN COURSE \*

The task of the successor of the reader of an opening paper is an easy one, if he finds himself in opposition. If he finds himself in complete agreement, and if the previous speaker is a man who is in the habit of thinking out his problems thoroughly and broadly, and leaving nothing to be said on that side, then the successor may well wonder why he should take up anybody's time. Such is my condition. I have, therefore, no right to do anything more than to dwell upon a single phase of the question, selecting the one which seems to me the most vital.

The study of Latin in the Schools should have a double purpose. It should contribute both discipline,—a partial, but indispensable thing,—and a training of the literary and historical sense. For it should not be forgotten that, at the very time when the student is being taught to observe correctly and reason accurately, he is also reading some of the masterpieces of one of the great literatures. Now it is clear that the second aim cannot be gained, if the nature of the case makes it necessary for the teacher to put the main stress of his work upon the *mechanics* of the language, the mastery of which subserves

---

\* Remarks by Professor Wm. Gardner Hale, of the University of Chicago, immediately following Professor West's address.